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Zakah

The Linguistic Meaning of Zakah

The linguistic meaning of *zakah* is growth and increase. When it is applied regarding a person, it means to improve or to become better. Consequently, *zakah* is a blessing, a cleanser and betterment¹.

Regarding this, Ibn Taymiyyah said, "The soul of the person who pays his *zakah* becomes purified, and the blessings in his money increase."

The Juristic Meaning of Zakah

The word *zakah* refers to the determined share of wealth prescribed by Allah to be distributed among deserving categories. Imam Nawawi said that this share of wealth is called *zakah* because it increases the funds from which it is taken and protect them from being lost or destroyed.²

The word *zakah* occurs thirty times in the Quran, out of which, twenty seven times it is linked with prayer.³ The three places where it has not been linked with prayer are:

﴿فَسَاكِنُهَا لِلَّذِينَ يَنْفُونَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ﴾

"I shall ordain (good) for those who are the *Mut-taqoon* (pious) and give *zakah*." (*Al-A'raf*, 7: 156)

1. Al-Mu'jam Al-Wasit, 1/396

2. Al-Majmo': 5/324 as quoted in Fiqh az-Zakah: 1/56.

3. Al-Mu'jam Al-Mufahras Li-Alfaz Al-Quran AL-Kareem: 331,332

Zakah During the Makkan Phase

During the Makhan phase, *zakah* was legislated as a general obligatory charity, without limit and without conditions and without any fixed *nisab* (minimum amount on which *zakah* is due), period of time, or rate. Let us study how Qur'an describes *Zakah* in Makkan Phase.

That which You Give in *Zakah* Seeking Allah's Countenance

Allah says:

﴿فَاتَىٰ ذَا الْقُرْبَىٰ حَقَّهُ وَالْمِسْكِينَ وَابْنَ السَّبِيلِ ذَٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ لِّلَّذِينَ يُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَ اللَّهِ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٣٨﴾ وَمَا آتَيْتُم مِّن رَّبًّا لَّيْرَبُوا فِي أَمْوَالِ النَّاسِ فَلَا يَرَبُّوهُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَمَا آتَيْتُم مِّن زَكَاةٍ تُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَ اللَّهِ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُضْعِفُونَ ﴿٣٩﴾﴾

“So give to the kindred his due, and to *Al-miskin* (the poor) and to the wayfarer. That is best for those who seek Allah's countenance, and it is they who will be successful. And that which you give in *riba* (to others), in order that it may increase (your wealth by expecting to get a better one in return) from other people's property, has no increase with Allâh; but that which you give in *Zakât* seeking Allâh's Countenance, then those they shall have manifold increase (*Ar-Rum*, 30: 38,39)

Riba, in this verse, means that which is given as a gift to others in the hope that they will give back more than they were given. Allah does not give a reward for this. This is how the verse was interpreted by Ibn Abbas, Mujahid, ad-Dahhak, Qatadah, Ikrimah, Muhammad bin Ka'b, and Ash-Sha'bi¹.

Glad Tidings for the Believers Who Give *Zakah*

Allah says:

﴿طَسَّٰ تِلْكَ ءَايَاتُ الْقُرْآنِ وَكِتَابٍ مُّبِينٍ ﴿١﴾ هُدًى وَبُشْرَىٰ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٢﴾ الَّذِينَ يُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَهُمْ بِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ يُوقِنُونَ ﴿٣﴾﴾

“These are the verses of the Quran and (it is) a book (that makes things) clear; A guide (to the right path); and glad tidings for the believers. Those who perform as-*Salah* and give *zakah* and they believe with certainty in the Hereafter. (*An-Naml*, 27: 1-3)

In, Surah *Luqman*, Allah says:

﴿هُدًى وَرَحْمَةً لِّلْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٣﴾ الَّذِينَ يُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَهُمْ بِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ يُوقِنُونَ ﴿٤﴾ أُولَٰئِكَ عَلَىٰ هُدًى مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٥﴾﴾

“These are verses of the wise book. A guide and a mercy for the *Muhsininun* (good doers). Those who perform as-*Salah* and give *zakah* and they have faith in the Hereafter with certainty. Such are on guidance from their Lord, and such are the successful. (*Luqman*, 31:3-5)

1. Ibn Kathir: 5/89

Zakah During the Madinan Phase

In the Madinan phase, *zakah* was based on *nisab* and *maqadeer* (amounts). It is difficult to find decisive evidence that relates the exact year it was made obligatory. Although the saying of Dammam bin Tha'labah indicates that *zakah* was already obligated by the 5th year of Hijrah, according to Al-Hafiz ibn Hajar, most of the scholars say that *zakah* was obligated in the 2nd Hijrah year, after the obligation to fast during the month of Ramadan and the payment of *Sadaqatul-Fitr*.

We will first mention some selective verses about *zakah* to show the importance and virtues of *Zakah*.

Giving Zakah Joins People as Brothers in Religion

Allah says about polytheists:

﴿لَا يَرْفِقُونَ فِي مُؤْمِنٍ إِلَّا وَلَا ذِمَّةً وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُعْتَدُونَ ﴿١٠﴾ فَإِنْ تَابُوا وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوُا الزَّكَاةَ فَخِوُنَكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ وَفَصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١١﴾﴾

With regard to a believer, they respect not the ties, either of kinship or of covenant! It is they who are the transgressors. But if they repent, perform *As-Salah* and give *Zakah*, then they are your brethren in religion. (In this way) we explain the *Ayat* (proofs, evidences, verses, lessons, sings, revelations, etc) in detail for a people who know. (*At-Tawbah*, 9: 10,11)

This reiterates the statement that if the repentance of the unbelievers is not accompanied by the establishment of Prayers and the payment of *Zakah*, then they would not be considered as a part of Islamic fraternity on the grounds of their mere repentance.¹

Those who Give Zakah are on True Guidance

Allah says:

﴿إِنَّمَا يَعْمُرُ مَسَاجِدَ اللَّهِ مَنِ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَأَقَامَ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَى الزَّكَاةَ وَلَمْ يَخْشَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ فَعَسَىٰ أُولَٰئِكَ أَن يَكُونُوا مِنَ الْمُهْتَدِينَ ﴿١٨﴾﴾

The *masajid* of Allah shall be maintained only by those who believe in Allah and the last day, perform *As-Salah* and give *zakah* and fear none but Allah. It is they who are expected to be on true guidance. (*At-Tawbah*, 9 : 18)

When Gold and Silver will be Heated in the Fire of Hell

Allah says:

﴿وَالَّذِينَ يَكْنِزُونَ الذَّهَبَ وَالْفِضَّةَ وَلَا ينفقُونَهَا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَبَشِّرْهُمْ بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ ﴿٣١﴾ يَوْمَ يُخْمَىٰ عَلَيْهَا فِي نَارِ جَهَنَّمَ فَتَكُونُ بِهَا جِبَاهُهُمْ وَجُوهُهُمْ وَظُهُورُهُمْ هَذَا مَا كَنْزْتُمْ لِأَنفُسِكُمْ فَذُوقُوا مَا كَنْتُمْ تَكْنِزُونَ ﴿٣٥﴾﴾

And those who hoard up gold and silver and spend it not in the way of Allah, - announce unto them a painful torment. On the day when that (*Al-Kanz*: money, gold and silver etc., the *zakah* of which has not been paid) will be heated in the Fire of Hell and with it

مَا غَنِمْتُمْ وَأَنْهَأَكُمْ عَنِ الذَّبَاءِ وَالْحَتَمِ وَالنَّقِيرِ وَالْمُزَفَّتِ

“I order you to do four things and forbid you from four others. (I order you) to have faith in Allah, confess that none has the right to be worshiped but Allah, to perform *Salah*, to pay the compulsory *zakah*, and to pay one-fifth of the booty in Allah’s cause. Likewise, I forbid you to use *dubba*, *hantam*, *naqir* and *muzaffat* (names of utensils used for preparing alcoholic drinks).⁵”

To Give a Pledge for Paying Zakah

Jarir bin Abdullah ؓ narrated:

بَايَعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ عَلَى إِقَامِ الصَّلَاةِ وَإِيتَاءِ الزَّكَاةِ وَالنُّصْحِ لِكُلِّ مُسْلِمٍ

“I gave the pledge to the Prophet ﷺ to offer prayers, give *zakah* and to be sincere and true to every *Muslim*.⁶”

Plates of Fire will be Heated for Them in the Fire of Hell

Abu Hurairah ؓ narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: “There is no owner of gold or silver who does not pay what is due on it, then, when the Day of Resurrection comes, there will be beaten out for him plates of fire which will be heated in the Fire of Hell, and his sides, forehead and back will be branded with them. Every time they cool down they will be reheated for him, on a Day the length of which is fifty thousand years, until judgment is passed among the people. Then he will be shown his path, either to Paradise or Hell.” It was asked: ‘O Messenger of Allah, what about camels?’ He said: ‘There is no owner of camels who does not pay what is due on them – which includes milking them on the day when they are brought to water – when the Day of Resurrection comes,

5. Bukhari: 1398

6. Bukhari: 1401

a soft sandy plain will be spread out for them, and the whole herd will be gathered, and not a single young camel will be missing. They will trample him with their hooves and bite him with their mouths, and every time the first one has passed the last of them will return, on a day the length of which is fifty thousand years, until judgement is passed among the people. Then he will be shown his path, either to Paradise or the Hell.” It was asked: ‘O Messenger of Allah, what about cattle and sheep?’ He said: ‘The owner of cattle or sheep who does not pay what is due on them, when the Day of Resurrection comes, a soft sandy plain will be spread out for them, and the whole herd will be gathered, and not one of them will be missing, and none of them will have twisted horns, missing horns or broken horns. They will gore him with their horns and trample him with their hooves. Every time the first one of them passes him the last of them would be made to return to him, on a day the length of which is as fifty thousand years, until judgement is passed among the people. Then he will be shown his path, either to Paradise or to Hell.’ It was asked: ‘O Messenger of Allah, what about horses?’ He said: ‘Horses are of three types: Those which are a burden to one, those which are a shield for him, and those which are a source of reward. As for those which are a burden, a man keeps them to show off and to oppose the people of Islam. They are a burden (of sin) for him. As for those which are a shield for a man, he keeps them for (*Jihad*) for the cause of Allah, and he does not forget the rights of Allah concerning their backs and their necks. They will be a shield for him. As for those which bring reward to a man, he keeps them for the people of Islam for the cause of Allah, in a meadow or a field. They do not eat anything from that meadow or field, but it will be recorded for him as *Hasanat* (good deeds), however much they eat. And their dung and urine will be recorded for him as *Hasanat*. If they break their halters and run away over one or two hills, Allah will record the number of their hoof marks and dung for him as *Hasanat*. If their owner takes them to a river and they drink from it, even though he did not intend to give them water, Allah will record the amount that they drank from him as *Hasanat*.’ It was asked: ‘O Messenger of Allah, what about donkeys?’ He said: ‘Nothing has been revealed to me about donkeys except this comprehensive verse: ‘So whosoever does good equal to the weight